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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000259

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: MINNAWI: WE ARE CHASING JEM OUT OF DARFUR

REF: KHARTOUM 245

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On February 24, the Chairman of the Sudan Liberation Movement and Senior Presidential Assistant Minni Minnawi told CDA Fernandez that his fighters are currently chasing JEM fighters north to the Chadian border and out of Sudan. Minnawi reported that his forces have been emerging victoriously from clashes and almost staged a successful ambush on JEM, but that UNAMID's presence near a JEM convoy deterred SLM/MM - something which demonstrates UNAMID's close coordination with JEM, alleged Minnawi. Minnawi also discussed his recent visit to Egypt, the peace process, and two recent meetings with senior GOS officials. END SUMMARY.

SLM/MM ON THE HEELS OF JEM
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12. (C) A relaxed Minnawi told CDA Fernandez on February 24 that the Justice and Equality Movement has been significantly weakened within the last two weeks. He claimed that his SLM/MM fighters defeated JEM near Colgay and Daba Tuga, that JEM is currently moving north, and that JEM is clearly fleeing to its Um Jaras base in Chad. Minnawi stated that JEM lost over fifty vehicles in the fighting during the last two weeks. Minnawi also reported that within the last several days his SLM/MM fighters prepared an ambush on one of JEM's convoys, but that one of UNAMID's peacekeeping units moved through the area, preventing the attack on JEM. Minnawi alleged that this proves UNAMID's close coordination with JEM. Minnawi reported that a shared hatred for JEM is starting to unite the other rebels, and that "we expect there to be a major change on the ground in Darfur," a change spurred by next week's expected ICC announcement.

VISIT TO EGYPT
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13. (C) Minnawi appeared pleased with his February 17-19 visit to Cairo and meetings with the Egyptian President, Foreign Minister, Intelligence Chief, Health Minister, and other GOE officials. Minnawi reported that in addition to discussing the negotiations in Doha, the visit focused on Egyptian aid to Darfur. In his meetings, Minnawi reported that he complained of the failure of Arab states to fulfill their donor pledges made in the last two years. According to Minnawi, the Egyptians responded that they have fulfilled all of their pledges as they delivered money and in-kind assistance directly to the GoS. "Rather than bringing development projects straight to Darfur, the Egyptians now realize that they have been indirectly financing the NCP," claimed Minnawi. Other forms of non-monetary GOE aid to Darfur have also been ineffective, suggested Minnawi, as

Egyptian food designated for Darfur was left to rot in Port Sudan awaiting customs clearance. (Note: As reported reftel, it appears as there is a disconnect between Egyptian perceptions of this subject and Minnawi's account. Egyptian poloff Tamer Azzam recently told poloff that Minnawi raised this subject with multiple GOE officials, but that Egypt has consistently delivered aid and development projects directly to the people of Darfur and not through the NCP/GOS as Minnawi alleged. The perception in Darfur, however, remains that the Egyptians have done little or nothing to help the people of Darfur and that is true of all the Arab states. The impression given is that whatever has been donated goes to strengthen the NCP and not help the people. End Note.) Despite the seemingly cordial relations between the GOS and GOE, Minnawi stated, "from my conversations with the Egyptians it really does seem as though the GOE has a big problem with this (Sudanese) regime."

PEACE PROCESS

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14. (C) Minnawi said that following the first round of discussions in Doha, almost all of Darfur's rebels, Sudan's neighbors such as Egypt and Libya, and the people of Darfur all are deeply disappointed and pessimistic about the process thus far. According to Minnawi, Chadian President Idris Deby ordered Khalil Ibrahim ahead of the discussions not to sign any agreement of substance, especially a cessation of hostilities, in Doha. Minnawi said that rather than seeking a true step forward in the peace process, Ibrahim had three ulterior motives in Qatar: 1) freeing his half brother Abd Al-Aziz Osher; 2) receiving payments from Qatar for his attendance; 3) and demonstrating that JEM is the supreme movement in Darfur. Minnawi stated that Ibrahim achieved the second and third goals, but was unable to free his brother or anyone of any significance in JEM. (Minnawi pointed out that

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the individuals recently released by the GOS had no relation to JEM but were innocent Darfuris picked up by NISS in Khartoum following JEM's May 10 attack on Omdurman.) On the issue of money, Minnawi added that after initially refusing to attend the negotiations, it is very clear that the Qataris paid Khalil Ibrahim to attend the talks. As evidence of this, Minnawi said that the Egyptians told him that although Khalil Ibrahim wanted to visit Cairo after Doha, Khalil Ibrahim was reluctant to fly directly there, preferring first to go to N'djamena and then back to Cairo. According to Minnawi, the Egyptians told Khalil Ibrahim, "Fine, go to N'djamena first, drop off your money, and then come back to Cairo!"

REBEL UNIFICATION HOSTED BY EGYPT?

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15. (C) The Egyptians believe that the current direction of the process is flawed and that Qatar is punching above its weight, reported Minnawi. He added that the Egyptians told him, "The population of Qatar is the same as one building in Cairo and now they are involved in Gaza, Lebanon, and Sudan!" Because of their disapproval in the peace process in Doha, the Egyptians are now interested in rebel unification and are willing to host a meeting for this purpose, reported Minnawi. "I can bring them to Egypt for this purpose," claimed Minnawi. (Comment: Minnawi did not specify a timeline, which rebels would participate, or the exact nature of his discussion with the Egyptians on this point. It appears as though the idea of a rebel unification meeting in Egypt is still at the conceptual stage. Comment.) Minnawi said that the Egyptians see a troublesome connection between Iran, Sudan, Hamas and Egypt's own internal Islamist opposition and this connection underscores their deep suspicion of the Doha talks.

MEETINGS WITH GOS OFFICIALS

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16. (C) Minnawi also described his recent meetings with Sudanese Intelligence Chief Salah Ghosh and Vice President

Ali Osman Taha. Ghosh reportedly told Minnawi "because you are not helping us, we cannot help you." Alluding to the fact that Minnawi remains both a high-ranking official in the Government of National Unity and the leader of a rebel movement, Ghosh also stated "You have one foot in and one foot out - you can't be two places at once." Minnawi provided less detail about his meeting with Vice President Taha, but stated that Taha remains involved in the Darfur portfolio, despite the many constraints on his time and attention.

17. (C) Minnawi reported that he will likely return to Darfur in the coming days, though the impending March 4 ICC announcement may result in a delayed trip. He would prefer to be on the ground there when the announcement is made.

COMMENT

18. (C) Although we appreciate Minnawi's interpretation of the military and security environment in Darfur, we question its full accuracy. The last two weeks in Darfur have been some of the most chaotic and confusing of the conflict with inter-rebel fighting, quickly changing alliances, and wide movements across vast Darfur. In all likelihood the presence of a UNAMID convoy near JEM's retreating force was a mere coincidence. UNAMID frequently admits to us that it does not know where the rebels are or are moving. Additionally, given UNAMID's propensity to avoid conflict, it is unlikely that the hybrid force would get in between two aggressive rebel movements, even if it could quickly deploy there. Minnawi's recent visit to Egypt and his self-proclaimed military successes seem to have bolstered his confidence. Minnawi is most at ease when dealing with military issues, and with increased fighting and activity throughout Darfur, Minnawi appears to reverting to his old form. While we don't fully buy his talk of military victories, it does seem clear that, having stirred a hornet's nest, JEM is finding easier to enter Darfur than to remain there, despite its unmatched propaganda prowess.

FERNANDEZ